



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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TO: Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections, Insurance, Campaign Finance Reform,
and Housing

FR: Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen

DT: February 18, 2010

RE: Written Testimony in Support of 2009 Senate Bill 533

I write today in support of Senate Bill 533. This bill would enable us to implement the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network, a statewide public safety initiative that we have developed at the Department of Justice.

At the Department of Justice, we exist to assist local law enforcement in our mutual mission to fight crime and enhance public safety. We do this in many ways. One way that we do this is by sharing information. For example, every day the Wisconsin Statewide Information Center analyzes and disseminates to the hundreds of law enforcement agencies throughout law enforcement information about unique criminal activity or missing children. By increasing the number of law enforcement aware of a particular criminal trend or enterprise, we increase our chances of capturing suspects or preventing a crime before it occurs. Better information to more law enforcement about criminal activity helps law enforcement protect all of us from crime.

The Wisconsin Crime Alert Network takes the concept of electronic information sharing a step further: information to those private entities affected by crime on a regular basis. By providing appropriate information to private citizens about criminal activity, law enforcement increases its eyes and ears, resulting in more suspects being caught and more missing children being recovered.

Here is how it will work. Law enforcement trained by the Department of Justice to use the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network would send out messages to participating businesses and members of the community about criminal activity, criminal trends, or missing persons. By using a drop down menu, those messages can be distributed to specific geographic regions—or even statewide—and specify the type of private entity to receive the message. Participants and law enforcement would then receive an email or fax with the message. Alerted and armed with information, participants can be on the lookout for unusual behavior or identified suspects. This will help them protect themselves—and help them alert law enforcement.

The concept of law enforcement sharing information about criminal activity with affected members of the local community is not new. What is new is the capability to efficiently transmit information to different regions throughout the state so that members of all potentially affected communities. We should take advantage of that capability.

Take for example a series of prescription drug thefts from pharmacies in Southeastern Wisconsin. An alert could be sent out by the responding local law enforcement agency to pharmacies in the region who are members of the network. The alerts could carry images from security cameras or descriptions of suspects, allowing pharmacies to be on the lookout for the suspects. By reporting suspicious activity to police, they can protect themselves, their inventory, and ultimately those who might become hooked on the stolen prescription drugs that would have been otherwise distributed at a local high school.

Another example to cite would be scrap metal theft in Oshkosh. It isn't enough to notify the community in Winnebago County that a scrap metal theft has occurred. The thief may go elsewhere to liquidate his stolen goods. By notifying the participating businesses that purchase and process scrap metal in Milwaukee, for example, they can be on the lookout for the stolen goods described in a crime alert. When the thief attempts to sell to them, law enforcement can be contacted.

Sometimes statewide distribution will be appropriate. Take for example an abducted child. An alert containing pictures of the child could be sent throughout the network, and those on the lookout can report sightings to law enforcement. It was this very scenario that alerted me to how truly life saving a statewide crime alert network could be. In 2007, the Department of Justice issued an amber alert. It was believed the abductor was taking the children north or northwest. Before the missing children could be recovered in Wisconsin, their abductor had taken them to Minnesota. Thankfully, Minnesota has a crime alert network similar to the one I am endorsing today. Information contained in the Wisconsin amber alert was transmitted over Minnesota's network. A participating hotel received the alert, and hotel staff recognized the suspect from the crime alert message. They contacted area law enforcement, and the children were recovered safely.

Senate Bill 533 authorizes the creation of the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network. Creation of the system will not require any general revenue. It authorizes the Department of Justice to charge a nominal fee to those private entities that choose to participate. In Minnesota, where a similar network has been in existence for over 15 years, over 7,000 businesses are currently members and pay just \$12 a year to participate. One dollar per month to assist law enforcement in the apprehension of suspects—and to make their businesses and communities safer. Linking law enforcement with businesses creates a web of safety that each of our communities deserve. The network has been used in the apprehension of suspects who have been responsible for more than \$3 million worth of crimes including forgery, theft and burglary. It has also assisted in locating at least 10 missing people.

I believe in this initiative. Once launched, I believe businesses will participate and do so in broad numbers. Every business group I or my staff has met with has indicated strong support and a belief that many of their members would enthusiastically participate. That makes sense. Businesses have an intrinsic interest in participating. Not only can they help protect their staff and their inventory by participating, not only are many businesses throughout the state interested in the safety of their communities, but safer streets enhances business. It should never be forgotten that reducing crime and enhancing public safety is a critical component of healthy local economies.

Most recently, this proposal received bipartisan support during the past biennial budget cycle. The Wisconsin Crime Alert Network was placed in the budget by the Joint Committee on Finance and it passed both houses. Unfortunately, Governor Doyle vetoed it.

This program has the ability to make each and every one of your districts safer. Increasing the eyes and ears of law enforcement is a major step to make all of our communities safer.

Wisconsin Department of Administration
Division of Executive Budget and Finance

Fiscal Estimate - 2009 Session

☒ Original ☐ Updated ☐ Corrected ☐ Supplemental

LRB Number 09-4114/1	Introduction Number SB-533
Description An integrated crime alert network and making an appropriation	
Fiscal Effect	
State: <input type="checkbox"/> No State Fiscal Effect <input type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Revenues <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Revenues <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Create New Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs	
Local: <input type="checkbox"/> No Local Government Costs <input type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Revenue 5. Types of Local Government Units Affected <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Towns <input type="checkbox"/> Village <input type="checkbox"/> Cities 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Counties <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> School Districts <input type="checkbox"/> WTCS Districts	
Fund Sources Affected Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> GPR <input type="checkbox"/> FED <input type="checkbox"/> PRO <input type="checkbox"/> PRS <input type="checkbox"/> SEG <input type="checkbox"/> SEGS	
Agency/Prepared By DOJ/ Mark Rinehart (608) 264-9463	Authorized Signature Date 2/18/2010

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

DOJ 2/18/2010

LRB Number	09-4114/1	Introduction Number	SB-533	Estimate Type	Original
Description					
An integrated crime alert network and making an appropriation					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

2009 Senate Bill 533 authorizes the Department of Justice to create a network that provides law enforcement agencies the ability to notify other agencies and private entities of criminal activity and missing or endangered persons. The network will be supported on an on-going basis through annual fees paid by members of the network.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications

Once implemented, the Department of Justice anticipates that up to approximately 10,000 entities will sign up to the system. The department anticipates that Program Revenue from fees authorized by the bill will be able to cover the ongoing annual cost of maintaining and administering the program, which is expected to be \$125,000.